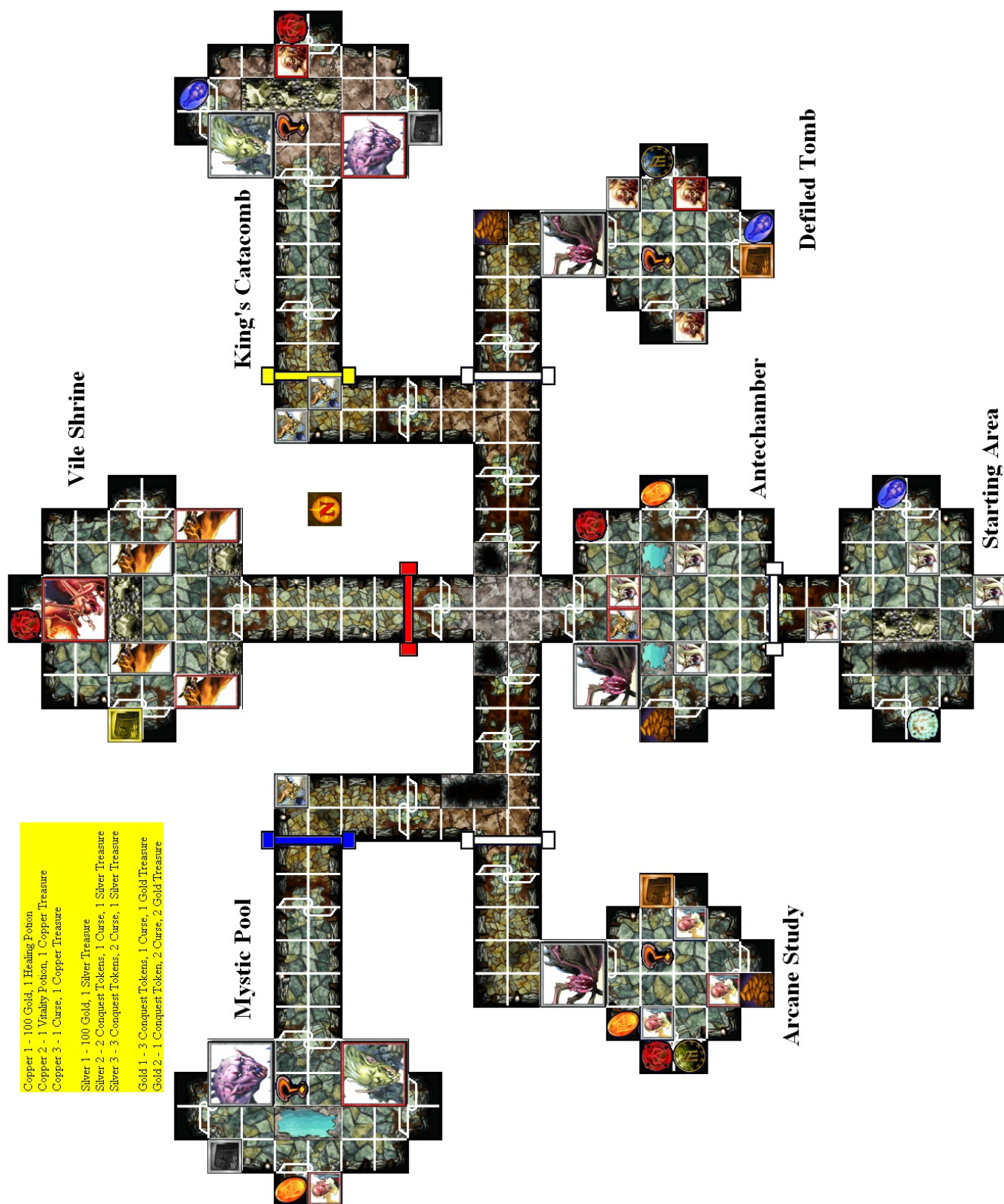




Shrine of Aargonis

By Scott Lewis

Quest Background

As you enter the small village, you feel a bit uneasy by the quiet. Though it is barely midday, you see nobody about. However, the fields and roads do not seem abandoned. Cautiously, you make your way to the local inn. As you walk in, you see a group of villagers gathered around a table. In the corner, you see a small band of children, with obvious looks of fear upon their faces. Upon seeing you, one of the adults stands up from the table and walks toward you.

"Greetings, heroes. Your timing could not have been better. This village is in great need of your help! We lead peaceful lives here, and until two days ago, our peace was undisturbed. Then suddenly, off in the distance, we saw a strange light from the Temple of Aargonis. We had thought this temple to be long since abandoned, as the demon Aargonis has been imprisoned in some magic realm for some time. We have legends of the terror he brought to our ancestors, and we cannot allow him to be freed. We were about to send our strongest men to investigate, but we fear we are not equipped to fight if monsters have taken residence there. Will you do this? We have little to offer, but should you succeed, our town will be grateful, and you will be welcome in our inn and homes any time!"

With that, he hands you a map, where you see a temple drawn not far from the village.

Quest Goals

After a hard day's journey, you arrive at the entrance of the Temple. You rest for a time to recover your strength, and enter the door. Your quest is to investigate the recent activity in the Temple. Prevent Aargonis from being freed from his prison if possible; if not, find a way to prevent him from returning to terrorizing the countryside. If you should find and activate various Glyphs of Transport in the Temple, so much the better. You begin with 6 Conquest Tokens. Should you lose all your Conquest Tokens, Aargonis will be freed and will have triumphed over you.

Starting Area

Though cobwebs and debris litter the entrance to the Temple, you can immediately sense that it is no longer empty. It is obviously in disrepair, but the stench of living creatures permeates the room. Suddenly, a small band of Beastmen appear before you, growling at your intrusion.

Antechamber

Sounds of scratching and flapping echo through the room and the adjoining hallways. While still dusty and littered with debris, this room has obviously seen more recent activity.

The main room you enter has a high ceiling, and high above you can see rafters, with human skeletons hanging from them, obviously extremely ancient. Some arcane magic seems to be holding them together, however.

The Red Runelocked door in the central hallway has no corresponding Red Runekey. It is opened by the heroes standing on the Encounter Markers in the other rooms. In order to open the door, the Encounter markers must be stepped on in this order:

- Arcane Study
- King's Catacomb
- Mystic Pool
- Defiled Tomb

If an encounter marker is stepped on out of sequence, the sequence must begin again from the Arcane Study.

Arcane Study

The walls of this ornately adorned room glow with a low, red light. Ancient tomes of spells long forgotten are littered about. The very air makes your skin crawl, as magic seems to fill every crack and hole in the walls. A trio of Sorcerers look at you with ready eyes, and with the flick of the wrist, a Bane Spider suddenly materializes before you.

If a hero ends its movement on the Encounter marker:

A deep, low rumbling sound comes from the very bowels of the Temple. Vaguely, you can make out the word "RED" sounding from a voice unseen.

Mystic Pool

A glowing pool of water stands in the middle of the floor. The smell permeating the room is stale and moldy, yet the pool itself is crystal clear, with a pale, poisonous-looking mist seeping upward from it. A sorcerer holds his hands up, seeming to draw energy from the pool, while a large Ogre and a young Naga look on.

If a hero ends its movement on the Encounter marker:

A piercing, high-pitched scream sounds in the depths of the Temple. As if from a banshee, the word "SHALL" rings out for a moment, and then all is suddenly silent again.

Defiled Tomb

The hallways slants sharply down into the earth. The walls of the corridor are lined with small slots which contain the remains of long dead priests and kings. The stench of decay is strong in this room, and you note that recent necromantic magic has been used here, as a group of skeleton archers ready their bows, and a large Bane Spider begins to look upon you hungrily.

If a hero ends its movement on the Encounter marker:

A gravelly voice which you can barely make out rolls from some unknown place deep within the temple. Almost as if a thousand bones scrape against the wall, you hear the word "OPEN".

If the Encounter Marker is activated and the full sequence has been completed:

As the voice fades away, you hear a loud rumbling from the center of the temple. Suddenly, the earth shakes violently, and you hear a loud blast from the antechamber hallways.

Remove the Red Runelocked door and replace it with a regular door. The Magic Seal has been broken.

King's Catacomb

A sharp passage downwards ends in a small, but largely ornate tomb. A large coffin, with the image of an evil looking king engraved on it, dominates the center of the room. A sentinel skeleton stands guard, and raises its bow at your intrusion. A large Naga is coiled nearby, seeming to enjoy the evil you can feel, as if seeping in from the walls themselves. An ogre also grins menecangly at you.

If a hero ends its movement on the Encounter marker:

A whisper, barely audible yet strangely distinct, rises from the ground as if in a mist. An unseen voice utters the word "DOOR", which echoes in the darkness, and seeps back into the floor.

Vile Shrine

The walls of the chamber emit a bright, white light. This light seems to fade near the door, and you can slowly see the darkness creep toward the main chamber, as if the magic enchanting the walls was losing its power. At the far end of the hallway you see an Altar, streaked with blood and glowing with an evil red fire. On the far side of the Altar is a giant Demon, and you smell the scent of burning fur around you.

"Welcome to my Shrine, foolish mortals. I thank you for freeing me from my prison, though my minions would have accomplished the task soon enough. This way, however, I can begin my freedom by feasting upon your very souls! I've been hungry for so long, and I shall now be satisfied! Your puny magics and weapons are no match for me - I will crush them like I will those pesky village people!"

The Master Demon in this room is the evil Aargonis. He has the same stats as a Master Demon except he has one more rank of Fear, and 4 more Health, and is immune to Burn. Also, if Aargonis ever deals the killing blow on a Hero, one Weapon or Rune wielded by that Hero is randomly chosen and removed from the game.

If Aargonis is defeated:

As your attack hits the angry Demon, he suddenly rears up in pain. "NOOOO!" he cries. "MY FREEDOM WAS WITHIN MY GRASP!". Suddenly, you see the remaining white light on the walls begin to coalesce around Aargonis, until suddenly, it explodes in a flash. You fall to the floor, but find yourself unscathed. The room is now empty, and you begin to hear a rumbling within the depths of the temple foundation. As the ceiling begins to crumble, you jump through a Glyph of Transport.

Safe in the town, you look toward the temple. The villagers also look on, and cheer as a bright flash engulfs the speck on the horizon, and is replaced with a column of smoke. You have saved the village, and the entire land, from the wrath of Aargonis.

The heroes receive 4 Conquest Tokens for defeating the mighty Demon Lord.